



Feb 15, 2022

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chair
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Keeping Ecosystems Living and Productive (KELP) Act (H.R. 4458)

Chair Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman,

The Orca Salmon Alliance, a coalition of 17 local, regional, and national organizations, is working to save the critically endangered Southern Resident orcas by recovering the salmon they depend on. Advancing ecosystem restoration for healthy and resilient habitats, including kelp forests, will be critical to meeting that goal. The undersigned members of the Orca Salmon Alliance therefore strongly support the Keeping Ecosystems Living and Productive, or KELP Act (H.R. 4458).

Kelp forests are highly productive, supporting sustainable fisheries and providing shelter and prey for large schools of forage fish—key to the food chain for salmon, and in turn for the endangered orcas.¹ They also provide a migratory corridor function for salmon, creating a bridge for juveniles from natal rivers to deeper waters.² However, in the Pacific Northwest and globally, kelp forests are increasingly at risk and their decline is accelerating in many geographies. Today, kelp forests are disappearing four times faster than tropical forests.³

The Southern Resident orcas—with only 73 remaining—are on the brink of extinction primarily due to a lack of Chinook salmon, their primary food source. Protecting existing salmon habitat and restoring key areas is critical for rebuilding salmon populations and ensuring abundant prey for the endangered orcas. And salmon recovery is not only critical for Southern Resident orcas, but also for Tribes and communities throughout the Northwest, and for our economy.

The threats to marine ecosystems and endangered species like salmon and orcas are compounded by climate change and ocean acidification. The Washington Governor’s Southern Resident Orca Task Force recognized that ocean acidification “impacts Southern Residents and salmon through their highly interconnected food web” as “zooplankton species such as pteropods and copepods that support the base of the orca food web grow more slowly in acidified waters.”⁴ Yet at the same time, marine ecosystems like kelp forests can also play key roles in climate adaptation and mitigation. In addition to buffering coastal communities from storms and providing habitat for fish, healthy kelp forests mitigate ocean

¹ Shaffer, A., Parks, D., Schoen, E. R., & Beauchamp, D. (2019). Salmon, forage fish, and kelp. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 17(5), 258-258. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.2056>

² Shaffer, J. A., Munsch, S. H., & Cordell, J. R. (2020). Kelp Forest Zooplankton, Forage Fishes, and Juvenile Salmonids of the Northeast Pacific Nearshore. *Marine and Coastal Fisheries*, 12(1), 4-20. <https://afspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/mcf2.10103>

³ Feehan, C. J., Filbee-Dexter, K., & Wernberg, T. (2021). Embrace kelp forests in the coming decade. *Science*, 373(6557), 863-863. <https://www-science-org.stanford.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1126/science.abl3984>

⁴ www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/OrcaTaskForce_FinalReportandRecommendations_11.07.19.pdf

acidification. The Orca Task Force thus identified protecting and enhancing kelp and eelgrass as important for improving ecosystem resiliency in support of Southern Resident orca recovery.⁵

The KERP Act would be a meaningful step in protecting kelp forests and contributing to salmon and orca recovery. The Act would establish a grant program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to support kelp forest ecosystem conservation, restoration, and management projects. The Act calls for \$50 million in funding annually through fiscal year 2026, which would be made available to states, Tribal nations, non-profit organizations and universities as well as commercial and recreational fishers. NOAA would identify projects that address focal areas for the recovery of kelp forests, including long-term ecosystem and socioeconomic resilience, monitoring, and connectivity. Such projects direct federal funding toward understanding the intricacies of these vital ecosystems and supporting local recovery efforts. This work will directly benefit salmon, orcas, and the many other species that rely on kelp ecosystems.

Thank you for your ongoing work on many important natural resource issues. We ask that you advance H.R. 4458. It is critical for salmon, orcas, and hundreds of other marine animals that we protect and restore kelp ecosystems for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Deborah A. Giles, PhD
Science & Research Director
Wild Orca

Joseph Bogaard
Executive Director
Save Our wild Salmon Coalition

Kathleen S. Gobush, PhD
Northwest Regional Director
Defenders of Wildlife

Lovel Pratt
Marine Protection and Policy Director
Friends of the San Juans

Nora Nickum
Ocean Policy Manager
Seattle Aquarium

Mindy Roberts
Puget Sound Program Director
Washington Environmental Council and
Washington Conservation Voters

Colleen Weiler
Jessica Rekos Fellow for Orca Conservation
Whale and Dolphin Conservation

Ben Enticknap
Pacific Campaign Manager and Sr. Scientist
Oceana

Howard Garrett
President
Orca Network

Amy Carey
Executive Director
Sound Action

Blair Englebrecht
Boating Programs Manager and Policy Analyst
Puget Soundkeeper Alliance

Whitney Neugebauer
Director
Whale Scout

Sophia Ressler
Staff Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity

Giulia C.S. Good Stefani
Senior Attorney
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

⁵ Ibid. This was part of Orca Task Force Rec. 44: Increase Washington's ability to understand, reduce, remediate and adapt to the consequences of ocean acidification, as kelp and eelgrass may reduce acidification locally.



Monterey Bay
Aquarium®



OREGON COAST
AQUARIUM



Feb 15, 2022

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House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman,
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Aquariums supporting the KELP Act (H.R. 4458)

Dear Chair Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman,

The undersigned aquariums write to express our strong support for the Keeping Ecosystems Living and Productive, or KELP Act (H.R. 4458). Kelp forests are a historically and culturally important ecosystem in California, Oregon, and Washington, and vital to the health of the ocean as well as food security and livelihoods.

As beloved, trusted science-based institutions, aquariums showcase the wonder of nature, inspiring diverse audiences to care, and more importantly, to take conservation actions. We have expertise in kelp forest ecosystems and are undertaking related work from outreach and education to research on kelp growth and restoration efficacy.

Kelp forests serve as one of the most vital and ecologically productive ecosystems on the planet. They provide shelter and foraging areas for hundreds of marine organisms, including sea otters, seabirds, critically endangered sunflower sea stars, and a multitude of fishes. But these critical ecosystems are in decline as a result of stressors like climate change and pollution. In Washington state, south Puget Sound's shorelines have lost two-thirds of their bull kelp forests.¹ On the North coast of California, more than 95% of kelp forests have been lost in recent years due to higher ocean temperatures.² And globally, kelp forests are disappearing four times faster than terrestrial forests.³ Shrinking kelp forests mean loss of biodiversity and habitat, decreased climate resilience for coastal communities, and a decline in fisheries and food security.

¹ <https://washingtondnr.wordpress.com/2021/02/18/kelp-forests-are-disappearing-from-south-puget-sound/> citing Berry HD, Mumford TF, Christiaen B, Dowty P, Calloway M, Ferrier L, et al. (2021) Long-term changes in kelp forests in an inner basin of the Salish Sea. PLoS ONE 16(2): e0229703.

² <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/148391/monitoring-the-collapse-of-kelp-forests>

³ Feehan, C. J., Filbee-Dexter, K., & Wernberg, T. (2021). Embrace kelp forests in the coming decade. *Science*, 373(6557), 863-863. <https://www-science-org.stanford.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1126/science.abc3984>

The Keeping Ecosystems Living and Productive Act, or KELP Act (H.R. 4458), will enable important and urgent steps to protect and restore these essential ecosystems. It will establish a grant program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to support meaningful and increased investments in kelp forest conservation, restoration and management projects. We support its focus on projects that address greatest relative regional kelp declines, address long term ecological or socioeconomic resilience, enable increased monitoring and assessment, focus on kelp restoration efforts and prevention of large-scale kelp forest loss, or coincide with focal recovery areas identified in federal and state management plans.

Please advance H.R. 4458 to ensure we can protect and restore kelp ecosystems in a manner that reflects their broad importance and the urgency of the threats they face. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Aquarium of the Pacific
Long Beach, CA

Monterey Bay Aquarium
Monterey, CA

Oregon Coast Aquarium
Newport, OR

Seattle Aquarium
Seattle, WA



GREATER FARALLONES ASSOCIATION

January 22, 2022

Congressman Jared Huffman (CA-02)
1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515 | 202-225-5161

Dear Representative Huffman,

We are writing to further underscore our appreciation & support of the KELP Act. The Greater Farallones Association has long understood the importance of healthy marine ecosystems and has witnessed first-hand the decline of our kelp forests along the California coast. Bull kelp and giant kelp are not only essential building blocks for the many fisheries and invertebrates that forage and take shelter in their presence, but they also play a vital role in coastline protection, tourism and in sequestering carbon. The myriad ecosystem services kelp provides impacts our economy and our way of life which is why it is so critical that the KELP Act legislation you have sponsored advances forward.

We fully support this bill and the essential funding it will bring to the region and thank you again for demonstrating your leadership in understanding why this legislation will make a huge positive difference for local tribes, communities, students and businesses.

Please list the Greater Farallones Association as being on the public record staunchly in support of this effort.

Sincerely,

Deb Self
Executive Director

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**National
Marine Sanctuary
Foundation**

301.608.3040 | 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1275, Silver Spring, MD 20910

February 16, 2022

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
US House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
US House of Representatives
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and
Wildlife
US House of Representatives
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and
Wildlife
US House of Representatives
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Westerman, Chairman Huffman, and Ranking Member Bentz,

I write to express support for H.R. 4458, the Keeping Ecosystems Living and Productive (KELP) Act and urge you to advance this important piece of legislation. The Kelp Act would establish a new grant program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to fund conservation, restoration, and management projects focused on kelp forest ecosystems.

Kelp forests create and support some of the most productive marine ecosystems in the world. Kelp forests provide permanent and temporary habitats for thousands of species of fish, invertebrates, and marine mammals such as whales, sea lions, and dolphins. These underwater forests are natural defenders of our coastlines and critical for coastal communities. They buffer wave action caused by storm surges and changes in the tides and prevent erosion by trapping nearshore sands and preventing them from being swept out to sea. Kelp forests also filter pollutants and debris, which helps ecosystems and communities that support economically important activities such as fishing, diving, and other tourism.

In addition to supporting diverse populations of plants and animals and protecting our coastlines, kelp forests help combat climate change by trapping and storing carbon dioxide. Kelp removes carbon dioxide from the environment, stores the carbon molecules in its vegetation, and releases oxygen molecules as a byproduct. The carbon the kelp sequesters does not enter the atmosphere or the ocean, offsetting the effects of human-linked climate change and ocean acidification.

Kelp forests are vital and resilient ecosystems, but can be damaged by changes in oceanographic conditions, an imbalance of predators, irregular climate, storms, and



**National
Marine Sanctuary
Foundation**

301.608.3040 | 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1275, Silver Spring, MD 20910

destructive fishing practices. Unfortunately, in northern California a combination of ecological stressors has led to extensive kelp loss at an alarming rate.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is committed to supporting protection and restoration of kelp forests, including the Farallones Kelp Recovery Program that promotes national, regional, state and local partnerships to advance kelp restoration, monitoring, research and community engagement. The Greater Farallones Association and Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary work with a passionate community of individuals, organizations, Tribes, and agencies to collaborate and seek solutions for broad-scale restoration and recovery of kelp forests in the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary.

Though recovery efforts are underway, more funding is needed to address, prevent, and reverse kelp forest loss in California and throughout our nation's waters. The KELP Act will direct federal resources to support these vital recovery efforts.

I thank Congressman Huffman and the co-sponsors of the KELP Act for their leadership on this issue and strongly urge the Committee on Natural Resources to support and advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

Kristen J. Sarri
President and CEO

Congressman Jared Huffman (CA-02)

2/11/22

1527 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515 | 202-225-5161

Dear Representative Huffman,

We are writing to express our continued appreciation and strong support of the Keeping Ecosystems Living and Productive (KELP) Act. Kelp forests throughout California provide important ecosystem services, which include building essential habitat for thousands of species, supporting cultural practices and resources and sequestering carbon. In recent years, kelp forests have declined throughout the state, resulting in devastating economic and ecological impacts. 95% of kelp forests have been lost in northern California, and as a result commercial and recreational fisheries in the region have collapsed. Local communities, tribes, organizations and agencies are working hard to initiate restoration, conservation and management actions. The KELP Act would provide essential funding for the immediate recovery of kelp forests and fisheries, while also aiding crucial work to increase resilience of kelp to climate change.

We thank you for your leadership in sponsoring this bill and your understanding why this legislation is so vital. We fully support this bill and all of the future projects it would fund for the restoration and recovery of kelp forests in California.

Please list our organization as staunchly in support of this effort.

Sincerely,

Francesca Koe

Program Chair,

Deb Self

Executive Director,

GREATER FARALLONES ASSOCIATION

David Goldenberg

Manager,

Jon Holcomb

Commercial Diver,

CALIFORNIA SEA URCHIN COMMISSION

Sheila Semans

Executive Director

NOYO CENTER FOR MARINE SCIENCE

Tom Ford
CEO,
THE BAY FOUNDATION

Betsy Peabody
Executive Director,
PUGET SOUND RESTORATION FUND

Keith Rootsaert
Manager,
GIANT GIANT KELP RESTORATION PROJECT

David Helvarg
Executive Director,
BLUE FRONTIER

Julia Marsh
Co-Founder & CEO,
SWAY

Erin Axelrod
Partner,
THE LIFT ECONOMY

Marianna Leuschel
Creative Director,
ABOVE/BELOW, KELP CAMPAIGN

Congressman Jared Huffman (CA-02)

1/31/22

1527 Longworth House Office Building

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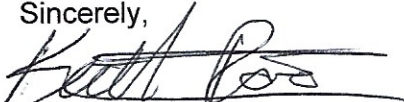
Dear Representative Huffman,

We are writing to express our continued appreciation and strong support of the Keeping Ecosystems Living and Productive (KELP) Act. Kelp forests throughout California provide important ecosystem services, which include building essential habitat for thousands of species, supporting cultural practices and resources and sequestering carbon. In recent years, kelp forests have declined throughout the state, resulting in devastating economic and ecological impacts. 95% of kelp forests have been lost in northern California, and as a result commercial and recreational fisheries in the region have collapsed. Local communities, tribes, organizations and agencies are working hard to initiate restoration, conservation and management actions. The KELP Act would provide essential funding for the immediate recovery of kelp forests and fisheries, while also aiding crucial work to increase resilience of kelp to climate change.

We thank you for your leadership in sponsoring this bill and your understanding why this legislation is so vital. We fully support this bill and all of the future projects it would fund for the restoration and recovery of kelp forests in California.

Please list our organization as staunchly in support of this effort.

Sincerely,



Keith Rootsart

G2KR.com

408-206-0721



Giant Kelp
Restoration Project



Congressman Jared Huffman (CA-02)
2/1/22

1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515 | 202-225-5161

Dear Representative Huffman,

The Bay Foundation is writing to express our continued appreciation and strong support of the Keeping Ecosystems Living and Productive (KELP) Act. Kelp forests throughout California provide important ecosystem services, which include building essential habitat for thousands of species, supporting cultural practices and resources and sequestering carbon. In recent years, kelp forests have declined throughout the state, resulting in devastating economic and ecological impacts.

95% of kelp forests have been lost in northern California, and as a result commercial and recreational fisheries in the region have collapsed. Local communities, tribes, organizations and agencies are working hard to initiate restoration, conservation and management actions. The KELP Act would provide essential funding for the immediate recovery of kelp forests and fisheries, while also aiding crucial work to increase resilience of kelp to climate change.

We thank you for your leadership in sponsoring this bill and your understanding why this legislation is so vital. We fully support this bill and all of the future projects it would fund for the restoration and recovery of kelp forests in California.

Please list our organization as staunchly in support of this effort.

Sincerely,

Tom Ford, CEO The Bay Foundation